

*This thesis focuses on the contest that can be defined as an epoch in Irish political discourse, the Treaty of Lisbon referendum 2008. It approaches the subject from an alternative angle to current research, which predominately focuses on the outcome of the referendum rather than the causes of the outcome. Principally, this research offers a critical discourse analysis of the preliminary debate covering the sessions of Dáil Éireann from the begin of the debate on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2008 to the final statements on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2008 which debated the controversial government backed Treaty of Lisbon. This thesis wishes to trace the ways in which opposition actors attempted to resonate their arguments with chronicled master frameworks of Irish foreign policy a tactic which has emerged as a key ideological resource, and to the extent they utilised neutrality as a persuasive tool in influencing the outcome of the debate.*